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Senate

The Senate met at 9:30 a.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, Father of Mercies, we open our hearts to You, the source of all that is good and holy. Renew and revitalize our Senators for their service to You and country, surrounding them with the shield of Your Divine favor.

Lord, help them to remember that You continue to have final control of all things, ever able to transform dark yesterdays into bright tomorrows, and to bring order out of chaos. Remind our lawmakers that to whom much is given, much will be required. May they see their lives as a privilege to be lived to the fullest in serving with humble gratitude.

We pray in Your sacred Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HELLER). The Democratic leader is recognized.

ZIKA VIRUS FUNDING

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I am glad to see the Presiding Officer is my colleague from Nevada.

Yesterday I said Republicans should not play loose with Zika funding. What is Zika? For the first time in recorded history, we have mosquitoes that are

causing birth defects. Mosquitoes have plagued this world for centuries—perhaps forever—but they have never ever caused birth defects. They have caused death and a lot of terrible sickness but never birth defects. Now they are moving forward. We need to do something to stop this dreaded spread of this virus.

I said yesterday the Republicans shouldn't play loose with Zika funding, but that is exactly what they have done. We had an appropriations bill on the floor, and in that there were a number of things that were very important. We had money to do something about Zika. There was money in there for lots of different issues—a very broad bill, having a lot of things in it—one of our appropriations bills.

The Republican agreement on the MILCON-VA is a disgrace. It is a mockery of how Congress should treat an emergency. The conference report was jammed through the House with no debate, with a rule that was questionable. They are supposed to give a certain number of days' notice on anything they do on the House floor. Of course, they did this within a few hours. We don't know the exact time, but it happened around 3 o'clock in the morning—something like that—when they jammed through this bill. That bill provides \$1.1 billion in Zika funding, which is \$800 million short of the President's request.

Remember, the President's request was more than 4 months ago, and we have learned since then how awful the spread of this virus is. We knew quite a bit 4 months ago, but we know more now. There is a report also, in addition to being short in that respect—remember, this is an emergency bill as it relates to Zika. All emergencies—flood, fire, earthquake, all of the many things we face every year, we take care of as emergencies. It is part of the responsibilities of the American people that they pay for that, and they have always been happy to do it. When there

was a situation with a devastating windstorm, a deluge of water with Katrina in Louisiana and all that part of the country—it doesn't matter what the emergency is, we have taken care of it in the past, but not this Republican Congress, no, no.

They also, in this so-called conference report, stripped \$120 million from Ebola funding. Remember, 2 years ago, Ebola was the thing that frightened Americans. All over America people were afraid of Ebola, this terrible disease originating in Africa. Well, 2 years have gone by, Ebola has been contained but not eliminated, and there is still, according to the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control, lots and lots of work that needs to be done, but the Republicans keep taking away from the funding. It is really unfortunate, but that is not the half of it.

They cut a half a billion dollars from the Affordable Care Act—ObamaCare. The Republicans have tried 67 times to defund ObamaCare—67 times—and that has failed, but the stripping of Ebola money and ObamaCare money—it gets worse than that.

The conference report would completely undermine access to birth control for women in Zika-affected areas by restricting money for Planned Parenthood. This is all some women have. It is the only care they have, the only place they can go. So women are disproportionately affected by Zika. At a time when it is more important than ever for women to plan their families, we are appalled at this partisan attack on health centers women rely on to get the care they need.

Instead of responding to this emergency that is threatening American women, Republicans are using this awful virus as an excuse for another attack on women's health. Republicans have voted repeatedly in this Congress to defund Planned Parenthood. The Republican Zika bill is just more of the same anti-women—something I am

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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